



# fortnight

Tom Corrado



again, for you . . .

*This is not Wonderland  
and you are not Alice.*  
– Anon

1~

## Capturing Moments with Sharpies

*We do not remember days, we remember moments.*

– Cesare Pavese

You could swear you've been here before  
this scene from the *Age of Innocence*  
but you don't remember whether  
you were with anyone –  
anyone worth remembering that is.  
You remember being upstaged at Starbuck's  
your five minute car wash  
a five hour trance with a bumper buffer.  
You can't imagine what you were thinking  
so you retrieve your journal entry  
and take out the Sharpies.  
Your aptitude refreshed you remember  
that you were trying to master  
the Art of Another.  
(Is that why your stand-in is here?)  
No, that's not it.  
Return to something more telling.  
The grape arbor  
that summer afternoon in Sedona?  
The white sandy beach in a cove  
off the tip of Provincetown?  
What about that walk through the snow?  
Ducking into a small bistro  
to get out of the rain?  
Now you've become a twitching hyperbolic  
saint dispensing Pez to the polloi.  
More retelling.  
It was here before you.  
These fields of dreams, these homes,  
these people.  
You managed to botch the last still life

and you're still in the game.  
But that's the name of the game, isn't it?  
Your soul - did I say soul? - wasn't into it.  
Nor was your body.  
You were shortchanged,  
but nonetheless you pocketed the coins  
and smiled into the camera.  
Fancy that!

2~

### More of the Same

You try to let go of the memory  
but the music returns, without images,  
so you google what you recall,  
picking and choosing.  
Some work, dovetailing  
with the spectrum of sounds  
traipsing through empty rooms  
which only a few days ago  
held the magic that most of us -  
well, maybe only the lucky ones -  
enjoy for months, sometimes years.  
The etchings tell it all,  
brimmed with desire and ecstasy.  
The path cleared, stretching out.  
This will have to do.

3~

### Expected Gain

*While I'm digging in the tunnel, the elves  
come with solutions.*

- Seymour Cray

You made the pilgrimage to Cray's tunnels

but the solutions didn't come  
and now you're telling the world  
about simulations  
standing at the curb lip-syncing an aria,  
the one you carried on about  
after seeing the opera.  
How it bathed you and filled the emptiness -  
the emptiness that was always underfoot  
like a stray cat  
tripping you up more than once  
culminating though for some strange reason  
in merriment and laughter, you arguing  
against *The Law of Small Numbers*  
insisting it was the end point that counted  
trying to convince yourself as well.  
You kept telling me  
you're waiting for it to wear off  
your voice catching as if you wished to  
touch base one more time.  
You knew the path was obscured  
with reports from fellow pilgrims  
preoccupied with gear.  
You finally opened it up  
not only your life but your living space  
knocking down the wall  
ripping out the carpet  
sanding and sealing the floors.  
I've got to hand it to you.  
You pulled it off: on clear days, you can even  
see the lighthouse that long ago protected  
those who lived here.

4~

Paging Through Jung's *Red Book*

*She was young, of course. . . .*

- Siri Hustvedt

You've misplaced your archetype and now  
your unconscious is collecting itself  
and leaving.  
You thought you had it all worked out  
but every minute brings a change.  
Restate your case.  
You bought into the line breaks  
and realized too late  
that the enjambments were a joke.  
Your trust has made you untrustworthy.  
I've heard it from you before:  
I had to protect myself.  
OK, are you now free to be the self  
you see or are you clubbing onlookers  
with that old - and very tired - I'm  
confused?  
You're lucky you have time.  
Those you've blindsided refuse to pick up.  
I can't blame them.  
Jung broke with his pal Freud  
over scrambled eggs,  
built a scale model of his childhood village,  
then with gaslight proceeded to search  
for his self, carve it out so to speak,  
renew membership in the Square One Club.  
You too can be an event horizon.  
You too can block hostile takeovers by those  
laying claim to your *inner beauty*.  
It's all here in the pages of Jung's *Red Book*.

5~

Until Nothing Is Left

*... as longing fades until nothing is left of  
it.*

- Mark Strand

Images flood the page.



You hold an hourglass up to the moon.  
The dailies begin.  
Your eyes fill  
with colors, and costumes, and angularities,  
touch just out of reach,  
the final scene, you turning away,  
Not fair.  
And you thought it would be?  
You do remember your entrance, yes?  
Getting clobbered  
with what you thought would never happen?  
You had a copy of the script?  
You knew your lines?  
Hadn't we rehearsed the scene  
gone over the details  
made changes  
discussed the incidentals  
the ultimatum?  
What ultimatum? There was no ultimatum.  
Am I confusing you with someone else?

6~

### Posthumous

You've begun to feel temporary -  
your dreams of the future  
your arguments with the past  
bent harmonica reeds  
asleep in the closet  
the tune out of tune.  
You've joined the ranks of ordinary,  
confused adults  
bottlenecking checkout lines  
brown-bagging lunch  
doing however many reps at the gym.  
Has anyone noticed?  
This is what it's all about, yes?  
Your car leaves the scene of an accident.

You follow suit reconstructing moments  
with the Erector Set  
you picked up at a garage sale  
parts unknown.  
Your son/daughter will graduate  
and assume the position.  
And your aging parents?  
They've already passed,  
their cat mingling daily with onlookers  
lifting his/her head to meet their  
questions.  
Your present is tense, the sun offline.

7~

### Cut and Run

Now look what's happened:  
the party of the first part bailed -  
Styrofoam Starbucks in hand,  
warm-up suit looking the part.  
And what part is that, exactly?  
Whatever the contract calls for.  
The foreplay wordplay  
served up with air guitar  
and spiffy website  
hawking attitude apparel;  
the three act play chopped to one.  
A short run to the corner eye-candy store.  
To begin again, yes?  
What? You mean nothing more?  
Do the math.  
Opening day closed: your life discarded,  
kicked to the curb,  
moments of passion cooling:  
your weeping counterpoint  
to the water music shadowing you.  
No stranger to cutting and running,  
you now reap what you sowed,

pack mules in the street  
hustling Post-its of dreams.

8~

### Dancing on the Roof

You sleep with jealousy and run red lights  
bronzing conjugations of *fornicate*  
trying to give the impression of laughing  
through intersections.  
Scribbles aside you paddle to the middle  
and sketch the shoreline.  
The sun sits between timeouts.  
It's all about staying the moment  
finding a script with starting blocks  
tailor-made then moving online  
for subtleties.  
You got rid of most of her  
at the transfer station.  
But some things are difficult  
to part with, yes?  
Sticking to your fingertips  
when a storm approaches for example.  
Seeing them in your rearview mirror.  
And now, she's dancing on the roof  
the angle making it impossible for you  
to let go.

9~

### Without

You audition for the part  
parading your naiveté as freshly-laundered  
linen sheets  
the bed made with dreams of first times  
around the block alien -  
all perspective

all logic  
out the window.  
Your 180? Inconsistent  
and undeniably out of character.  
But then, perhaps not.  
The recipient? Conveniently guilt-ridden  
(Would do me in!) – a placeholder  
a stand-in  
a once and future insignificant other  
the security camera's fuzzy evidence  
a TKO in the first round.  
And the disruption?  
Appalling. Nothing to be done.  
You nailed it. The part.  
The opening curtain, though, snagging.  
The audience, hushed, now whispering,  
clearing their throats, shuffling their feet.  
The unwritten novel of a passion  
crumbling, falling away, replaced,  
most assuredly, by dry-eyed re-entry  
into the world of the living.

10~

Intact at Daybreak

*Yet we insist that life is full of happy  
chance.*

– Lyn Hejinian

You run into him/her in a parking lot.  
Words tumble out, collide.  
Screens refresh. Images avalanche.  
The pain of updates.  
Later you escape to Netflix,  
before descending into a maelstrom.  
Again, you can't believe what's happened.  
What's happening again.  
Too much at stake?

You had trouble last time, yes?  
Why put yourself through this?  
Why go there? The honesty? The openness?  
The honesty of openness?  
Surely, you can conjure a better reason.  
Something more palatable with . . . ?  
With what? The heart as lonely hunter?  
Crack the window, will you please,  
it's getting a bit stuffy.  
Fortunately, they will be here shortly  
with gossip from the four corners.  
Irrelevant stuff, most likely, but  
therapeutic when you're down and out  
to your last roll of paper towels.

11~

### That's Not Going To Happen

Especially now, with the cat out of the bag  
the holiday season ready to pounce  
and your latest tête-à-tête simmering  
in the atelier.  
Listening to covers while journaling  
will buy you the anonymity  
you've convinced yourself you need  
and enable you to resume your place in line.  
The Persian rug in the room is gone  
as are the white beaches  
with the beached iMacs.  
You've been fortunate enough  
to live the life of make-believe,  
and get away with it, for the most part.  
I'm surprised you were never called  
to the front office, that strange transfer  
station populated with mannequins  
of questionable character.  
If only you had described the beauty  
of the algorithm you wrote

that tied it all together,  
you could have redeemed the coupons  
downloaded in anticipation.  
That would have been quite a coup.  
Too late now. Too late for most things.  
Enter your username and password  
then click the box for *Remember Me*.

12~

Overwritten

*... and so to survive, they'd need to forget.*  
- Lawrence Raab

You revisit the memories  
knowing that soon some will be overwritten.  
Permanently deleted.  
Several refuse to join the lineup.  
Others waffle.  
A long ball into the right field bleachers  
the runners advancing  
too late now to rethink the gameplan.  
You too had to be dragged in here  
by the scruff of the neck  
pockets turned out, shoes and socks removed,  
trying to buy time, incoherent.  
And then, of course, the room you pretend  
doesn't exist.  
Sorry, but the title has been reworked.  
The scene rewritten.  
Someone had to do it, yes?

13~

Wait!

They've left off an ending  
a wrapping-up

the closure that we're told we all hope for  
that we all need  
and that (we naively believe)  
will tidy-up the guest room  
and allow the would-be guest to return  
along dwindling roads to homegrowns  
and otherworldly pleasures.  
And so your intimidations -  
the hunchback of your nightmares -  
will continue to knock  
at the back door at three AM  
awakening you to dig among the flower beds  
for shards of the flower pots  
from your childhood make-believes  
when sandcastles appeared like anthills  
and images of candy canes lined your dreams.  
And the benevolent accommodations?  
None, only misinterpretations of twilight  
leaving you wobbling along the path  
to the gingerbread house  
now overgrown with should-haves.

14~

## Outtakes

*I am not now that which I have been.*  
- Lord Byron

You befriend a Chinese Puzzle Box,  
walk through scenes of over-rehearsal and  
exasperation.  
The (mis)direction is good for both of you.

This time without the backdrop.  
You begin to lose interest, yes?  
Nonetheless, proceed as if smearing paint on  
canvas.

Forget the image. There is none.  
Wing it.  
Let yourself be enveloped by the drama

of the moment, the spontaneity  
of the lens, the elements of time captured.  
Bemoan the loss.

Again, this time with tension.  
The method is beside the point  
resurfacing as binaries

which down the road will have their say,  
striking a chord with many.  
(Pretend an audience.)

See how far you can take it.  
The surprise will be costumed in the next  
chapter  
however oppositional.







swimming in happenstance press

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